WE ARE Métis WE ARE THE FORGOTTEN ONES THE SOULESS ONES

A MIXED PEOPLE

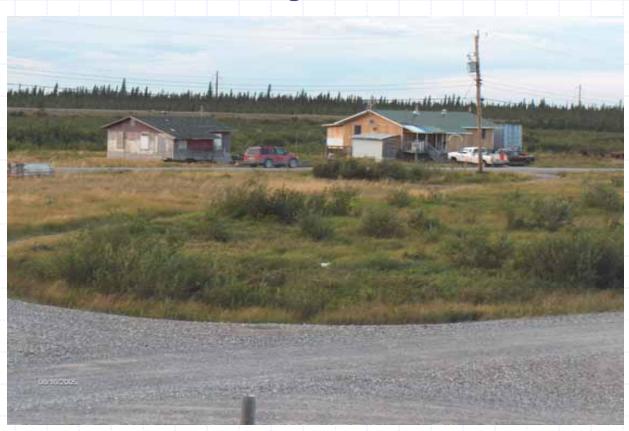




It's Time

ACCEPTANCE

What do we **really** want?



OUR GRANDMOTHERS ARE

LISTENING



Section 35 of the Constitution of Canada

As Métis we feel that all Aboriginals in the Great Lakes basin should be involved in this review for the following reasons:

(www.omaa.org)



Aboriginals have occupied this continent for over 10,000 years, whereas the non-Aboriginal peoples are recent occupants, but during their short tenure they have visited a host of problems upon the environment and eco-systems that tax the ability of the Mother Earth to survive,

Non-aboriginals have generally failed to grasp the concept of providing for future generations and that they should be stewards of the land,

Many of our people occupy lands surrounding the Great Lakes and the rivers and tributaries flowing into the Great Lakes, and derive their sustenance from the fish and animals occupying this eco-system

The agreement should address the needs of aboriginal peoples within the Great Lakes basin, and beyond this watershed including the Rupert's Land,, and there is an extremely important role for "Traditional Ecological Knowledge" in this issue

Winds with chemical particulates do blow to the Great Lakes from the prairies, birds fly to the James Bay

The GLWQA commits Canada and the United States to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the waters of the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem. This ecosystem does extend beyond. And is fed from beyond as well from the global distribution of contaminates

The GLWQA has been an effective bi-national mechanism for restoring environmental quality and preventing future degradation for the long-term protection of the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem

The Agreement itself provides a shared set of objectives for Canada and the United States on Great Lakes issues and has been beneficial to Canada by providing the basis for continuing, systematic and cooperative action to address Great Lakes environmental issues.

We as Métis people recommend to the Governments of Canada and the United States that they consider adhering to the following Aboriginal principles; Honor the wisdom that can be garnered from speaking to the elders in both the aboriginal and non-aboriginal community,

Respect the opinions and suggestions of all who take the time to provide insight into this process,

Transparency in the process is required when the Federal Government is required to consider the findings and recommendations and determine the next steps, and

Accountability must be inbred into any solution so as those responsible for findings and recommendations, whether it be concept or delivery, are held to high account by the public for their actions, given the nature of the issue.

Although Aboriginal people were not the primary engineers, nor beneficiaries of the technology that impaired the physical and biological integrity of the Great Lakes ecosystem, we as an integral part of this planet recognize and must accept a responsibility to our future generations

to make recommendations and practical solutions that are realistic, pragmatic, as well as practical while attempting to control, mitigate and minimize the long-term effects of environmental degradation that we are cognizant of.

As such aboriginal people are as in the past intimately a part of the earth and are bound to the pulse of the mother - we are one.

The failure of non-aboriginal people over the last 400 years to consult with the original peoples of this land, to appreciate our traditional knowledge has led to the critical health of our ecosystems.

Our people are starting to speak out on these matters recently the follow statement was released as follows:

THE BEMIDJI STATEMENT ON SEVENTH GENERATION GUARDIANSHIP

(http://www.ecomall.com/activism/rachel228.htm)

The Bemidji Statement on Seventh Generation Guardianship was released July 6 during the 14th Protecting Mother Earth Conference, convened by the Indigenous Environmental Network in Bemidji, Minnesota.

It combines the ancient wisdom of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) ---"The first mandate.... is to ensure that our decision- making is guided by consideration of the welfare and well being of the seventh generation to come." -- with the precautionary principle.

I task you to acquire this statement in its fullness, this knowledge and consider this in your work. Since this is the beginning step to this sharing of Traditional Knowledge, I wanted to begin by stating my reluctance to share.

I say this as my history has shown that when we as a people shared and in good faith gave information to the colonials they took this information and used it against us.

So to begin this step in a good way I went to number of elders as ask a few questions.

In fact I was again reluctant to share this with this group because of the statement that came back to me. But the more I thought on this statement the more it became so full of wisdom on many levels.

I say to you never ask an aboriginal a question and then assume you know what they mean because they may respond in English. English is a poor translator of our languages and culture and beliefs.



The question again, was "How do I explain to this group the importance of Traditional Ecological knowledge or "our knowledge of the Earth Mother" in fulfilling our seven generation responsibility"?

The elder sat and reflected for quit a while on this and with one short sentence summed it all up for me.

DON'T PISS IN YOUR DRINKING WATER!

If we could just do that in this society we would be in a better world. But regrettably we can even do that.

With all the great works all the learned people who have worked long and hard on this agreement in implementing research implementing programs we still can not say we do not as a society do the action, this elder says not to do.

I was asked by a James Bay elder to identify to you a serious concern. The communities of the James Bay who still very much live from the gifts of the land, who still practice their hunter gatherer customs are consuming species of birds that have replaced some of the more traditional foods

There are changes in the species composition of migratory birds. Adapting to these changes new species are now becoming a food source. Shore birds and cormorants are now on the dinning table.

Health and Welfare Canada on their web site identifies research they conducted on two James Bay communities and in the steel city of Hamilton, Ontario.

This research showed that Hamilton subjects had less PCB residuals than Kashechewan First Nation and then Fort Albany First Nation Band Members. This study identified that further work should be done.

Nothing is being done about these findings.

Cormorants are being studied on the Great Lakes, they are contaminated and they are flying to James Bay to be eaten by our people.

The Government of Canada knows these thing, but what is being done.

We are asked to share our knowledge of our ways, to share our traditional knowledge of the earth mother our integral relationship as a part of the earth mother so that you as Nations in control of our lands can do good things.

However, as identified by the elder as stated a few minutes ago, the obvious is missed by the governments

I task you to research the happenings over the last year and decade, in Kashechewan First Nation in the James Bay Lowlands where the government placed our people in a flood plain, placed them behind a dike just to get flooded out year after year.

The government has removed them from their traditional lands, allowing multi-national mining companies mining leases on traditional territories after the government has eroded by laws the rights of the people to share in these resources violating Treaty 9.

Maybe just maybe the younger generation on both sides of this cultural dilemma can see with clear eyes that the earth mother is just too small.

This is not the land of the free, both Canada and the United States are living confined in limited space breathing our own expelled air, drinking our own waste and killing our own people by pollution which will take millennia to clear up.

I was asked what story / examples I could give from a traditional ecological point of view to show how our knowledge has a place in this forum.

My grandfather was born in the 1870's, a Métis boat builder / fisherman. He recycled everything. Nothing was wasted.

Tree Talk

◆Daddy Joe was wise. He never told me things that did not have a message. He worked with wood and was a great man. I wanted to be like him. I loved the smell of the wood as he worked with it. He was a Métis boat builder.

♦ I loved the small models of all his boats lining the walls of his work shed. I loved the bins of copper metal nails filling old honey cans lining the edge of the floor. All his tools were hand made including all the files, drills, knives and wood planes.

There were many things a small boy could get into. He never scolded but smiled. He used everything. Each nail had its place he said. Never too many never too few. He wanted all his work to be the best. He said why do a half job when the creator is watching. If he dropped a nail he would pick it up. He never had to look as he always knew where it dropped.

- I asked him how he could do this. He would say the trees tell him. I would say there are no tree here.
- The look always said a story was beginning. All things are alive and are speaking to us, most people have forgotten how to listen. This wood here is alive and speaking, do you hear?

He used to call me Blank Face.

No grandfather. I would ask what am I to hear.

When we walk in the woods the trees speak to us, he would say. Sometimes great things — sometimes — who knows what they say. They are like that.

♦ I do not take a living tree unless I do great respect to the tree that I must cut. They must know why they are needed. If the tree understands the need then they will give themselves for use and this is a good thing.

To make a canoe for fishing is a good thing. All trees like this. Not one tree spirit has said no to me. I think they like the water.

♦ I like to take wood from more than one tree he would say. Sometime I would take four trees from four forests he would say. This makes a strong canoe. If the tress are from the four sacred directions you will not get lost on the big water. Daddy Joe lived on the Georgian Bay.

If it was good day Daddy J oe would stop awhile and start talking about many things. My favorites were the stories of the spirits in the woods, some good some bad. He used to tell me that before you entered a wood you should show respect. He warned that there were many who lived in the woods and not all like to be disturbed.

How do you tell what to do I would ask. He would smile and say listen. A long time ago a warrior was running from his enemies. He was from the people of the rock, from this area, our people. He did not stop for four days of travel.

Still he could not shake his followers. He new what he had to do. He was coming to a special woods where he knew from his father that there were forest dwellers of a nasty nature. Tricksters.

He knew this so he took off his medicine pouch and gave thanks to the tricksters by ceremony and by an offerings of corn and tobacco for his safe passage through the woods.

He showed great respect and walked without touching anything in the woods. He did not even stop for water though he was thirsty and did not each of the fruits, ripe and juicy.

♦ His enemies did not do this and did not stop and give respect. They drank and ate and disturbed the dwellers of the woods. They offended many spirits and the trees as well and especially the earth mother. There was a great shaking and the earth moved.

◆Again the enemies did not stop to give offerings to the spirits and ran through the woods. Again the earth shook in warning and the trees rustled their warning song. Again the enemies took no heed.

Their fate was sealed, for they ran right off the newly formed cliffs. We know these cliffs today as the Niagara Escarpment. Some say that on a lonely night you can hear the enemies' 'song of death as they are still here and the thunder birds cannot find them to take them to the sky world.

Tree Talk (concluded)

◆Always listen to the spirits in the woods Daddy Joe said. Listen to every sound. From this you will hear the spirits in the wind, the voices of the ancient ones and all the brothers and sisters of the woods telling of the past the present and the future. Learn these things and you will be wise. We are part of the mother and she is our life.

Wabiska Mukwa, Chief